



CITY COUNCIL
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CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Memorandum

TO: COUNCIL CHAIR DONOVAN DELA CRUZ
FROM: COUNCILMEMBER GARY H. OKINO *Gary*
RE: TRAVEL REPORT ON RAIL-VOLUTION 2005 CONFERENCE

For your information, attached is my travel report on the Rail-Volution 2005 Conference I recently attended in Salt Lake City, Utah.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at x7008.

Attachment

c: City Clerk

Council Com. No. 187

AR00085783

Rail-Volution 2005
"Power of Partnerships"
Salt Lake City, Utah
September 8-10, 2005

The conference was excellent... probably the best I've ever attended. It was focused for the policy-maker... with just enough technical detail for legislators and administrators to make sound decisions on all aspects of rail transit solutions. There were so many interesting workshops and topics. The problem was that I could only cover a fraction of what was being offered.

With the City and County of Honolulu embarking on a quest for a mass transit solution, the conference could not have been more applicable.

For me, there were several big confirmations:

1. Rail transit is the only big solution that will make a significant impact on reducing traffic congestion in any major metropolitan area.
2. It will take more than rail transit to deal with overall congestion, but all other solutions must be integrated with an essential "backbone" system that holds the whole transportation network together and makes it work. That backbone system is rail transit. Other solutions are not big enough to address the problem, but working together, in support of a rail system, the total solution can effectively deal with congestion.
3. Rail transit makes a big difference in whichever city it is implemented.
4. The initial effort of a city to implement rail transit faces tremendous opposition from the automobile, the oil and the highway construction industry... for obvious reasons. Once an initial segment is built and the community sees its effectiveness (make sure the most effective section is built first), then adding to the system proceeds without much difficulty. Salt Lake City is a good example (and they don't have nearly the congestion that we do here in Honolulu).

There was so much good information at that conference that I would like to share with everyone, but I will only highlight some of the main and interesting points of the sessions I attended.

One-on-one Transfer of Information

I would offer to speak to other councilmembers one-on-one to present more detail about the different topics. But, the City is now considering a mass transit solution, of which rail transit is clearly the only real solution we can turn to. So, I am probably prohibited by OIP from discussing this further with other

councilmembers, even though it would be tremendously in helping to craft the best and most cost-effective solution for our City. Since OIP will undoubtedly rule such tremendously vital and useful transfer of information as illegal “one-on-one serial communications”, I will forego the effort to relate these matters that are so critically important to our community to the rest of the Council.

In fact, I wouldn't be at all surprised if the OIP rules that this report violates the Sunshine Law.

Mobile Workshop: Connecting the Dots – UTA's University Line

This was a complete “what happened” session which included all the different participants from the Mayor's office to the people who run the line to the citizens' group that oversaw the planning and construction. Their insights about what they did right and what they would have done differently knowing what they know now was extremely interesting.

Using the design-build procurement process with incentive clauses was the key to completing the project on budget and ahead of schedule. The community process was also extremely important throughout.

Ridership exceeded expectations from the day the light rail system opened its operations.



Stunning fact: University of Utah has an enrollment of about 30,000 students. Before the line was built, about 1,300 students commuted by bus each school day. Since the day it started operations, 10,000 students use the light rail system daily.

Symposium: The High Cost of Free Parking

Talk about thinking out-of-the-box... this symposium shattered all the conventional thinking about parking requirements and its impact on development and traffic congestion. Here are some interesting points:

1. There is no basis for minimum parking requirements. In fact, it might be better to set maximum parking limits. In almost every city, too much off-street parking is being required.
2. Free curb parking is a big mistake. Our metered on-street parking rates are much too low.
3. Free parking increases solo driving by 60%.

Two very interesting concepts that are proven to be effective were offered.

1. Increasing parking meter rates to maintain a 15% on-street parking vacancy rate, with the increase revenues going to improve the district in which the increased rates are implemented. Proven in Pasadena and in London, England. In London, on-street parking is 10 pounds per hour (\$15-\$20 US dollars per hour). It has been good for the businesses as well as for traffic in London.
2. Low parking rates increase cruising for space, more congestion, a wasteful increase in energy consumption and less transit use.
3. Parking cash out program where employees who don't drive are given a cash allowance equivalent to the parking subsidy offered to other employees. This has resulted in a significant reduction in car usage in California.

There should be a maximum parking requirement. There is no basis for a minimum parking requirement that is in almost every municipality's zoning code. If a development wants to go over the minimum, then there should be some conditions that will either reduce congestion, car usage or energy consumption.

Refer to book: The High Cost of Free Parking, by Donald Shoup.

Innovative Financing: Who's Got the Money

This very interesting workshop session revealed what different municipalities are doing to finance their rail systems. Here are just some thoughts listed that should give us the potential sources of funding other than taxes.

1. Tampa: value capture \$600M to \$800M.

2. Portland Street Car System

- Private non-profit
- Local improvement districts
- City parking revenue bonds
- Tax increment financing
- Urban renewal funds
- Car option payments (\$200M)

The Portland Streetcar System has been a catalyst for \$2.5 Billion in new development along the line in the Pearl District (transit oriented development). The potential for value capture is tremendous.

3. Fairfax County – Dulles Metrorail

- \$3.5 Billion private-public partnership
- Toll road revenues (\$19M- \$28M annually)
- FTA – apparently there is no \$500 million maximum grant. The Dulles Metrorail expects to get FTA money in the neighborhood of \$1.8 billion.
- Special Investment District for Transit (Section 3.31) of the Commonwealth of Virginia Code. Affects 6600 businesses and raises about \$200M over the life of the project
- Property taxes (\$20M annually)
- Special improvement districts
- Transit oriented development on county owned lands -- \$35- \$40M value capture
- Business, professional and occupational license fees
- Airport landing fees

4. BART Dublin Pleasanton Infill Station

- Grants from 3-4 transit authorities
- Farebox and parking revenues
- Tax revenues of BART lands – leverage land value
- Prepaid loan revenue
- Prepaid tax revenue
- Restructured debt
- Bonds backed by sales tax receipts

Developing Partnerships to Sustain Rail and TOD

1. Mixed use TODs are highly desirable but very complex to make financially feasible.
2. TODs become stronger the longer you have the system.
3. Need to work with major landowners, universities.
4. In established systems like Dallas there is a strong competition for TOD development around stations.
5. Let the developers come to the City with proposals
6. Need a good comprehensive land use plan and public process
7. Value capture is now being done but must be highly desirable property... financial structure is very complex.
8. Value grows long-term... may be more appropriate for tax increment financing.
9. Look to Feds for programs that support TODs.
10. TODs offer much potential for affordable housing.

Transportation Funding and Land Use Control

1. Federal transportation funding depends on how well land use is integrated into the final plan... land use must have a strong role.
2. The FTA is now requiring stronger integration with land use planning.
3. Zoning... existing and planned changes must support transit.
4. New Starts Program being rewritten with greater emphasis on land use.
5. Land use configurations must improve "livability". Federal funding must be directly applied to this improvement in the quality of life.
6. To take advantage of federal funding, TOD policy for San Francisco (Transportation for Livable Communities) includes: minimum number of housing next to stations, affordable housing incentives, mixed use requirements and required integrations with pedestrians and bicycles.

Effective Advocacy Strategies

This was a comprehensive session for advocacy organizations... those who deal with elected officials to push their transit agendas. Looking at it as an elected official, I thought that the approach presented was very sound and it did identify precisely how an elected official would react to different approaches.

Among many other things, one item discussed was "What factors affect elected officials". You be the judge as to whether these are the factors that would influence your decision.

1. Public good (realize that both sides have different perspectives)
2. Friends, spouses, key contacts
3. Staff of the elected official
4. Job and development issues in the district
5. Media... little off-line publications get read by elected officials
6. Money... does not play as big a role
7. Constituencies... are you from the district?
8. A clear and concise message is most effective
9. Their own principles... recognize that they might not be the same as yours
10. Good public service

Responding to Critics

The session was devoted mostly to role-playing... answering allegations made by anti-rail advocates. Generally, the allegations are the same all over the nation. The anti-rail lobby has their own national organizations that provides them with the arguments along with manipulated and distorted statistics that support these arguments.

Rail advocates also have their own national organizations that debunk these allegations and arguments and provide the counter arguments and statistics that expose the approach.

Primary among the national organizations for good, sensible transportation solutions is the Center for Transportation Excellence. Their website: www.cfte.org provides the answer to almost all of the contentions made by the anti-rail groups.

Straight Talk About "New Starts" and Gain Leverage from FTA's "New Start" Land Use Criteria

Because of conflicts with other parts of the conference, I was unable to attend these sessions. But, because I thought it would be invaluable to hear what was presented, I purchased a recording of these sessions. Let me know if you would like to listen to these CDs. I would be glad to share them with you.

Other sessions

My problem was determining which sessions to attend. There were 8-9 sessions in each time slot... many, many interesting and relevant topics. There were also a variety of mobile workshops that provided much insight into the transportation situation of the host City. Again, it was physically impossible to attend all the sessions that I wanted to attend.

But, other than that, the conference was outstanding and I would recommend it to anyone interested in working on transportation solutions for Honolulu.

